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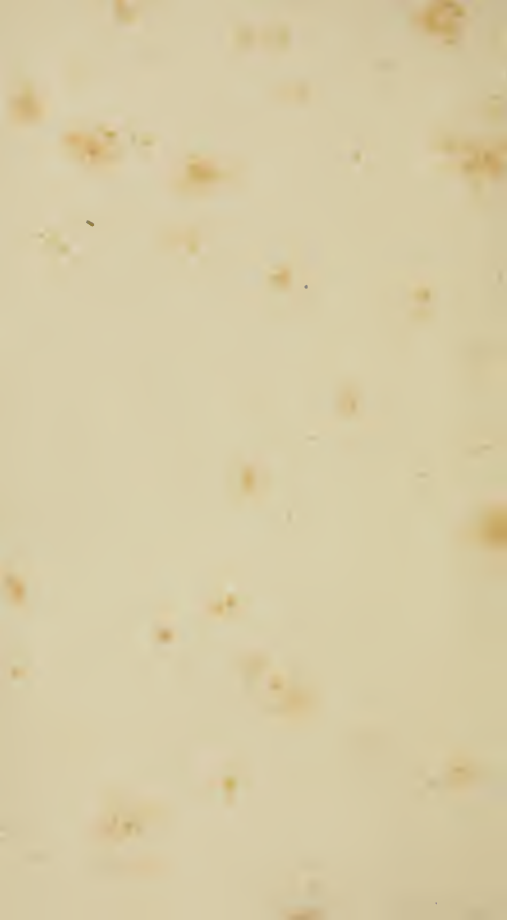
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THE PRIVATE
DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL
LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

A MODEL FOR YOUTH.

Κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν.

Rom. xv. 5.

BY THE
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ADVERTISEMENT.

I propose in the following pages to treat of the Private and Domestic Life and Character of JESUS, as distinguished from his public, official ministry; and to hold up this model for the imitation of the Young.

THE AUTHOR.

DEDICATION.

TO THE BELOVED YOUNG PEOPLE

OF HIS CHARGE,

THIS MINIATURE VOLUME

WHICH AIMS AT NOTHING BEYOND A PLAIN AND
FAMILIAR EXPOSITION

OF A CHARACTER

OF ALL OTHERS

THE MOST WORTHY OF THEIR AFFECTION AND
IMITATION,

IS OFFERED AS A TOKEN

OF THEIR

PASTOR'S FRIENDSHIP.

LIFE OF CHRIST, &c.



BIOGRAPHY is always interesting. The mind is pleased in beholding the graphic succession of incidents that pass before us as in a moving panorama; and there is in us a strong natural desire of information concerning those who have distinguished themselves in the world's history. For its gratification, the lives of warriors, philosophers, statesmen, and poets, have been explored with most curious research, and paraded in minutest detail. Not even the nursery has escaped; and the narrative of childish precociousness and

juvenile exploit becomes distended with "wasteful and ridiculous excess."

Some specimens of juvenile religious biography are exceedingly liable to this criticism. If not absolutely apocryphal, they are made so, through the biased imagination of the historian, magnifying very trivial and commonplace affairs until they loom before the astonished vision as most extraordinary events. For the edification of this reading age, the prolific press teems with amazing chronicles, wherein infantile prodigies figure amid such illustrious epochs as the process of dentition, the transfer from the nurse's arms to the first experiments in peripatetics, and the initiation into the mysteries of the pictorial alphabet; and the incipient developments of juvenile piety

are gravely recorded, from the first appropriate hymn or prayer which childhood lisps to its sublimer discovery and announcement that the stars are little perforations in the sky to let the glory through.

Now, while all this sort of absurdity is rich enough to provoke a smile, and the vanity both of parents and of too partial reporters is rebuked by the brief and simple beauty of the evangelical biographies, it is only the too great abuse of a proper curiosity that is to be condemned.

And there is one character that has appeared on the stage of human existence, in regard to whom, it may be pardoned if we feel some solicitude to learn the particulars of his childhood and youth.

Who of us that has ever contemplated the wonderful history of our gracious Redeemer, as it is exhibited by the four Evangelists?—who, in their vivid and engaging pictures, has seen the Holy Ghost descending like a dove to rest upon him, and standing by the side of Jordan, or on the Mount of the transfiguration, has heard the voice from the excellent glory, proclaiming “This is my beloved Son;”—who that has witnessed the successful conflict with the temptation in the wilderness, or sat at his feet to listen to the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, when he uttered the beautiful truths of the Sermon on the Mount, where he spake as one having authority, and not as the Scribes and the Pharisees; who that has followed his footsteps on his

errands of mercy, and beheld the generous exertions of his miraculous power ; that has heard the dumb speak and seen the dead come forth from the sepulchres at his bidding ; that has lived again in that cruel hour when vile men plaited the crown of thorns upon his brow, and drove the nails through those hands ever, and even then, stretched out in mercy ; that has wept at his tomb, and been revived again by the glorious resurrection of the Conqueror of Death and Hell, and has stood in raptured amazement to gaze upon him, as he ascended through the clouds, to *his* Father and *our* Father, to *his* God and to *our* God : And who, especially, that has listened to that celestial minstrelsy, when angels sung the song of redemption over the

plains of Bethlehem, or has bowed with eastern sages before the manger of the infant Son of Mary, or trembled with dread of the bloody tyrant who sought the young child's life and filled those hapless coasts with unavailing slaughters, and with the lamentations of bereaved mothers for the murder of their innocents; or who that has been astonished at the understanding and answers of the youthful and modest inquirer, who appears in the midst of the doctors in the temple, and has pursued his career, as the imagination painted him, returning from Jerusalem to abide amid the secluded employments of domestic life, in his parents' dwelling at Nazareth: who of us that has been absorbed by all these charming records, has not wished to know yet more of

the early incidents of such a life, thirty years of which were passed in a seclusion that is almost entirely hidden from our view? We would still nearer, oftener, and more intimately scan the stages of that progress which was made by the "holy *child* Jesus," that we might see for ourselves how he grew and waxed strong in understanding, the scenes wherein he displayed his fulness of wisdom, and manifested that excellence of grace which was upon him. We would wait upon the footsteps of such a *youth*, that we might hear his conversation, and become familiar with the beautiful and impressive particulars of such a *manhood*, while, still remaining in subjection to his parents, he increased in wisdom and stature, in all those years of filial

service, of patient waiting, and of pious preparation, and, in all, beloved both of God and man, up to the very point of his assuming the public functions of his mission and ministry as the Saviour of the world !

But it has not pleased the Holy Ghost to indite for us all the particulars of the early life of Jesus Christ. Indeed, although we are furnished with numerous and varied details of that portion of his life which comprised his public ministry, even in regard to it, we are told that there are many other things which he did, in the presence of his disciples, that are not written. But enough was written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life through

his name. In this reserve, though our curiosity is disappointed, yet is there no disservice done to us. There is sufficient for our attaining that knowledge which makes wise unto salvation. And the same discreet reserve is properly exhibited with respect to the scenes of his early years before entering on his public ministry. This characteristic of the sacred record, sober, dignified, brief, simple and modest, is in strong and disparaging contrast with those vain absurdities with which tradition has attempted to mend the word of God, and with the puerile fables which abound in such apocryphal narratives as the gospels of the "Infancy of Jesus," and other spurious books, wherein patristic and monkish zeal has profanely and fraudulently

endeavoured to supply the want which our curiosity, if not our piety, has found in the evangelical histories: while this very redundance of worthless miracles, and lying wonders, and all this deceivableness of unrighteousness and corruption of the truth and simplicity of the gospel, serve, at once, to demonstrate the presumption of the inventors, and, as a foil, to set off in its own brilliant and saving lustre, the beauty, the simplicity, the truthfulness, and the heavenly origin of the only record which God hath given of his Son.

But, although the veil is drawn over the greater part of the Saviour's early and private life—and it is even admissible that, beyond the striking incidents that are recorded, there were in a life so pure, so modest, and so se-

cluded, but few remarkable occurrences demanding record—yet we are not left altogether without information concerning his childhood and his youth. If we are precluded from an intrusive inspection of his retired hours, and are restrained by the scriptural and only authentic account of his youth from all mere conjecture and foolish invention, we are nevertheless sufficiently informed, if not for the gratification of idle curiosity, at least for the instructiveness of his example, and even for the corroboration of his matured claims and public official character, we are sufficiently informed of the leading facts and traits of his youthful deportment and singular early life.

For, besides the circumstances of his birth, his circumcision and presenta-

tion in the temple, the homage of the wise men who saw his star in the east, and the testimonies of Simeon and Anna, and the flight into Egypt—which it is not within our purpose to review at this time—we are also made acquainted with some important details of the interval between the return from Egypt, which was probably in his second year, and his baptism by John. And these intervening facts, under the light that is reflected upon them from the record of his public ministry, and of his own teachings, and from the apostolical epistles, become radiant and suggestive, so that it is no effort of rash and daring conjecture, if with such materials we undertake to illustrate the private history of Jesus Christ, not only in the period of childhood, up to his

appearance in the temple, at twelve years of age, but also in the succeeding eighteen years which elapsed while he dwelt at Nazareth in subjection to his parents, until he entered upon that public ministry, of which we have such ample details.

While then our knowledge is so limited, as to the specific incidents of his youth and childhood, a fact of which it becomes us to be aware, lest we overstep the modesty which bounds our inquiry and instruction, there is, on the other hand, so much revealed, that we can never be at a loss to know what *he* would have said or done in any circumstances of his life. And whilst it may be, that in the cautious endeavour to confine myself to what is authentically written in the Sacred

History, I may produce before you a feeble outline, that seems lifeless and barren, it becomes me still to say, that I have found that my task requires of me far less the effort of imagination and the employment of pictorial words, in painting eventful but unreal scenes, than that I should repress a teeming multitude of facts which start forth, demanding to be used, in that exemplary and instructive illustration which the Bible itself affords, of the life—the early youth of Jesus of Nazareth.

So far, therefore, from complaining of the barrenness of the field, we may the rather regret, that, in this exercise, we can do no more than suggest some hints toward such a history. That history embraces such themes as these:—*his*

physical, mental, and moral endowments—his increase in years and stature, and in intellectual acquisitions—his impressive reverence for divine ordinances, and his piety and obedience to God—his diligence, industry, and patience—his modesty and filial love—his perfect purity, and the estimation in which he was held by both God and man.

Let us proceed under the guidance of the sacred narrative: “And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they re-

turned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye

not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."—*Luke* ii. 40-52.

I. While we fully believe that he who was miraculously conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, was the possessor of a perfectly divine nature, we must not forget that it behoved him "in all things to be made like unto his brethren," and that he was even subject to all natural human infirmities, tempted in all points like as we are, sin only excepted.

"There is only this difference between him and us, that the weaknesses which

press upon us, by a necessity which we cannot avoid, were undertaken by him voluntarily and of his own accord.”—*Calvin.*

He was therefore as perfectly human, as he was perfectly divine. And this fact will account for all the difficulties which have been suggested, on the ground of those characteristics, actions, and speeches, which have been alleged to be inconsistent with his claim to be equal with God; and especially with his being born an infant of days, and his increase in age and stature and wisdom. “If it takes nothing from his glory that he was altogether emptied, neither does it degrade him that he chose not only to grow in body, but to make progress in mind.”—*Calvin.*

How his divine nature subsisted in connection with the human, we do not

inquire; nor even whether, as it has been conjectured, it was gradually communicated in its *effects* and *influences* on his intellectual powers, nor by what process it so operated, nor in what measures. This only we know, that "he received in his human nature according to his age and capacity, an increase of the free gifts of the Spirit, that out of his fulness he may pour them out upon us; for we draw grace out of his grace."

—*Calvin.*

Omitting all vain and profitless conjecture, and every misleading hypothesis, we find enough in the fact, that it was *because of this* union that his mind possessed its vigour, capacity and clearness, that his penetration was so acute, and his judgment so discriminating and infallible. Enough too for us to know,

why it was that he was the pure, wise and amiable character whom the gospel commends to our reverence, faith, and love, while we contemplate him both as our Saviour and as our example, bearing and dignifying our nature, clothed in a body like our own, subsisting amid the ordinary walks and relations of human life, and exemplifying in their highest possible perfection, every virtue, duty, and grace that can exalt and adorn our human nature.

It is eminently then his human nature, and his progress therein, concerning which the Evangelist instructs us.

It were the height of folly to attempt any description of the person of Jesus Christ, as child, youth, or man. Spurious accounts were indeed early fabricated; and poetry, painting, and sculp-

ture have all endeavoured to set forth his lineaments. The latter have delighted to represent him, especially in the agonies of the crucifixion. And a false religion, mad upon its idols, has first broken, and then, to conceal the impiety, has mutilated the commandments of God, in the fanatical adoration of its graven image of Christ on the cross. But instead of the impression which such unbaptized piety would thus make upon our minds, by these creations of unlicensed genius, the eye is pained by the ghastly, cruel exhibition, and the feelings are rather disgusted than edified by representations that never can reach, and for the most part only degrade that awful subject. And wherever the wayward and ignorant fancy has portrayed the person of

Jesus as luminous, and his head encircled with a halo, instead of enhancing our ideas of his dignity, it has both transcended the gospel record and the obvious facts, and belittled with man's folly the real majesty and grace with which his person was adorned. The pictures too with which the galleries of art have been filled, of the infant, the youth, and the man Christ Jesus, often presenting lineaments of great beauty, it need hardly be said are no portraits, and are at best the mere imaginations of painters; every failure adding to the reasons which show the folly, if not the impiety, of making any image or likeness of the Son of God.

Yet, who can doubt that his very person must have been distinguished for physical excellence. Pure and

holy, governed by the laws of highest reason, temperate and self-denying, free from all debasing appetites, and exempt from the deforming influences of all evil passions, we cannot but deem it an embodiment of perfect health. As the Lamb of God and the victim of sacrifice, we read that he was without spot or blemish; and as he was ordained of God to the priestly office—of rank and function superior to the priests of Aaron's line—the canonical requirements teach us that, therefore, he must have been free from all physical defects. In person, he must have been symmetrical, and in countenance, he must have exhibited an engaging comeliness. It needs no license of the imagination to conceive of him, that like Moses, he was a "goodly child." The

passage, "the grace of God was upon him," has been interpreted on good classical authority to signify the beauty of his person.* But it may more properly be understood of "the excellence of every description which shone brightly in him."

It is, however, more to the purpose to consider the effect of that intellectual and moral beauty which pervaded his soul. In these, he was "fairer than the sons of men." Not only do we instinctively conceive that the body must have been in its excellence, the fitting lodgment of such a soul; but we know also what an influence is conveyed from the inward man, and is manifested in the mere external features, and even in moulding the physiognomy. Grace,

* Wetstein—in Campbell—and Bloomfield.

tenderness, dignity and love, high thought, and heavenly affections dwelt ever in his heart, spake through his lips, swam in his eye, and sat upon his face—expressive features mirroring the soul; these lent a charm to his very person, and engaged the favour of the beholder. And what a countenance must that have been, which afterwards shone as the sun, and whose surpassing majesty, long after it had been so marred with many tears and griefs, could still abash and prostrate the band of armed ruffians that came to apprehend him in the garden. Nor is the force of this impression at all weakened, even if we transfer to his outward person, what is said of him—that he bare our infirmities and took our sicknesses, that his visage was so marred more

than any man, and that, springing up, like a root out of dry ground, he was without form or comeliness that we should desire him. Even if we suppose the man of sorrows to have had a body, weak, diseased, emaciated, the result of his acquaintance with grief; we may, nevertheless, consider the influence upon his person of his exalted moral attributes. His countenance bore even in its sorrowful lineaments, the impression of his dignity, patience, tenderness, compassion, purity, meekness, and sweetness of soul; and, but to look upon it, was to discern that loveliness of mental and of moral beauty, which so often engages our regard in the daily experience of life, even for persons, whose plain and homely features we forget, in the su-

perior charm of lofty intellect and virtuous soul.

II. As he grew up, increasing in age and stature, he *developed* that perfection of mental qualities with which he was divinely endowed. The expressions of the Evangelist refer to the natural vigour of his understanding, and the attainments of wisdom and knowledge with which it was furnished. His mind was strong and capacious. Its powers are evinced by all those acts of prudence, and by the various sayings, wherewith he confounded the subtlety of his captious foes, and by all the gracious and holy instructions in truth and duty, and that prevailing eloquence and authority with which his ministry abounded. But he was, nevertheless, born and grew as a child: he did not

spring forth from his birth a speaking prodigy, nor burst upon the astonished world in the full perfection of his native genius. It was through the ordinary process of growth, assisted indeed by the divine inspirations of his godhead, yet still by degrees, and by the needful discipline of instruction, reading, and meditation, that he attained and manifested his fulness of wisdom. As to the particular elements of his intellectual stores, it would be impertinent trifling to attempt detail. During his ministry, he spake of some things which were reserved even from him, though he were the Son. This of itself is no disparagement of His Omniscience, when we remember that he had a *human* soul, and that as mediator he was, in a very important sense, subordi-

nate to the Father. And this very reserve, I incline to think, is but official, and has reference rather to the function of making known, than to his own proper acquaintance with the things themselves. It was no part of his ministry to instruct men in those particular things.

But it is evident that his mind was developed early, and its progress in wisdom extraordinary. His acquaintance with divine truth was apparent, not only when in the exercise of his ministry, the Jews exclaimed, "Whence hath this man wisdom?" but in that remarkable interview, when, at twelve years of age, he sat in the midst of the doctors in the temple, both hearing them and asking them questions; and all that heard him were astonished at

his understanding and answers. Of this interview, by the way, a most improper idea is presented by some pictures, and even by some commentators, as if Jesus assumed the place of a teacher on this occasion, and disputed with the doctors. Nothing more took place than was common. It was customary for these public instructors to sit upon elevated benches, and their disciples sat at their feet, while a very free conversation took place between the teachers and the learners, and knowledge was communicated by the former in the way of question and answer, mutually propounded, after our method of catechising, or perhaps more probably, the familiar mode which prevails in our intelligent Bible classes. This was the modest attitude of Jesus,

as he heard, and asked questions and answered. The scene exhibits him to us as a diligent inquirer after knowledge—not relying, as inferior but vain minds do, on gaining knowledge without study; but it shows us also how his thoughts had been exercised; and it is not too much to say that, like David, he already evinced more understanding than his teachers. Of the themes of inquiry, we may be sure that they related to divine truth; and though there may have been no forwardness on his part to contradict these men, who were notorious corrupters of the word of God, there can be no doubt that his modest questions were of such a character as sorely to press upon the dogmatic haughtiness, which afterward he so sharply confronted and humbled,

giving even then a specimen of what he would be, when he should teach with authority, and the common people would hear him gladly, and it should be acknowledged that a great prophet is risen in Israel. Even in those early days was that prediction accomplished, "that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, as the spirit of counsel and of might, of wisdom and of knowledge, to make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."

I proceed to notice some particulars illustrating his moral characteristics.

III. His piety and devotion may be illustrated by the circumstances of his attendance at the temple when he was twelve years of age, and there manifested his regard for the worship of God, and his reverence for divine ordinances.

Although neither Joseph nor Mary seems to have clearly understood the distinguished lot which awaited him, yet of this we are sure, that he himself was fully aware of it; and that his parents faithfully trained him in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, while he gave himself to patient and diligent preparation for his future work. At Nazareth, his opportunities, beyond the domestic threshold, were probably few; and, if we may adopt the inferences concerning the character of the place, suggested by the disparaging estimate in which it was held, (John i. 46) the disadvantages of his situation were very great. For parental fidelity might be counteracted by surrounding evil example, and even diminished by the temptation of their circumstances, to

relax in their own duty. But we know that there was a Synagogue there, for Jesus preached in it afterwards, and how astonished its attendants must have been when they saw him with whose childhood and youth they had been so familiar, stand up to declare the fulfilment in his own person of the tender and beautiful prediction respecting the character and work of the Messiah. He was doubtless an habitual worshipper there; and such parents as Joseph, his reputed father, and Mary his mother—so favoured with divine communications, and entrusted with such a charge—so exemplary and so observant of the law—were not careless to impart religious instruction to this extraordinary child, to make him familiar with the word of

God, and to form his youthful habits of prayer and meditation.

Their fidelity to their high trust, amply discharged at home, is apparent also in their taking him up with them to the temple of Jerusalem. Thither the males of Israel were obliged to resort three times a year. The visit of the females was altogether voluntary. And it was customary also to take the children upon arriving at the age of twelve years, at which time they were supposed to be of sufficient discretion to be introduced into the church, and initiated into the doctrines and ceremonies of religion.

The visit of Joseph and Mary to the great festival upon this occasion, was a labour of love. It is evident, too, that those who came from a distance tra-

velled in companies, and thus they solaced the toils of the way with the comforts of social intercourse, and in singing the songs of Zion during the pilgrimage.

It was in all probability the first time of Jesus accompanying them—and we find him solicitous to improve the opportunity. Although the services of the festival continued through seven days, he exhibits no weariness—no impatience to be gone. Ah! how unlike that restlessness—not of youth only—which is so common, with respect to the exercises of the sanctuary. What a weariness to them is the Sabbath, and what an atrocious offence is it, that in the exposition of the gospel, the minister is so indiscreet as to tax their patience sometimes for a whole hour! The youthful

Jesus loved the Lord's house. Though possessed of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, he desired like David to dwell in the courts of the sanctuary, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. While then, his parents depart, he remains behind;— and still, until the third day after, he maintains his post of religious meditation and research into those things which had been shadowed forth in the rites and ceremonies of the paschal festival. His parents in the meanwhile do not at first miss him from their company: it was not carelessness on their part, but they supposed him to be with their friends and kinsmen. This supposition suggests to us the social, companionable temper of Jesus. Neither ascetic nor recluse, he mingled with men, and by

his own example, sanctions, as he ever adorned, the social, friendly intercourse of life. But not finding him where they first sought, his parents retrace their way to Jerusalem with a heavy, anxious heart;—a second day is consumed in their journey. Their fears arose from no misgiving as to his department; they sorrowed not with any apprehension of wilful truancy or misspent time in evil companionship. They knew him too well for that. Other evils were dreaded. Perhaps they thought of the persecution of his infant years, and feared some renewal of that danger; or it might be that straying from the caravan, some evil beast had destroyed him. They find him where they naturally sought him; for it is far less likely that they made much search elsewhere, than that

they went at once to the temple. Forgetting, for the moment, to consider what import there was in the scene which met her eyes when she saw him in the midst of the doctors; yet overjoyed for his recovery, Mary puts no restraint upon her gushing emotions: the tender anxieties of a mother's heart burst forth:—"Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" If in the reply to this expostulation, there appears to be something of rebuke—"How is it that ye sought me; wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—it may be justified at once, not only by remembering that with the dutifulness of a son, he hastens to explain, and so to relieve her anxiety, but that he appeals to the superior duty which he owed to his heavenly Father. Urgent and impres-

sive as are the claims of earthly parents, they are still subordinate to the claims of God. If worldly parents would command an obedience incompatible with the duties of piety, children are absolved from compliance. And when the rulers of this world required the Apostles to refrain from preaching the gospel, they replied, "Whether it be right to obey God rather than men, judge ye."

Such was Christ's reverence for religious duty at that early age. The incident reveals to us, his pious training—his love of devotion and prayer—his delight in religious worship—and his controlling sense of the duty he owed to God.—"He must be about his Father's business." "He must be at his Father's house." His whole life embodied this sentiment. For this he

emptied himself of the glory which he had with his Father before the world was; left his high throne and the abodes of the blessed; became an inhabitant of this low world, assumed the likeness of sinful flesh, and took upon him a servant's form; for this he submitted to poverty, toil, suffering and reproach; for this he never turned aside in weariness and disgust; it was his meat and his drink to do his Father's will; his zeal for this absorbed his energies and his time; in days of exhausting labour, in whole nights of prayer—by the sea-shore and in the desert—on the summits of the mountains, and in the public thoroughfares—in humble villages, in the city, and in the temple—this was *his* business. And at last, when the active depart-

ments of that business were completed, he declared, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" and shortly afterward, having ended all that he was to endure and suffer, he exclaimed, "It is finished;" and gave up the ghost.

And let it not be forgotten, that this devoted obedience is enhanced by the fact that he had ever before his mind, a full view of all the pains and sufferings which were appointed to him. When, in heaven, he undertook the work of human redemption, he knew that a body was prepared for him for this very purpose, and he declared, "Behold, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God."

Now, were there revealed to us at

our birth, a vision of all the scenes through which we are to pass in human life, the new-born infant would shrink from its coming existence, and prefer, to its inheritance of evil and sorrow, the boon of dying as soon as it opened its eyes upon this world.

Such a vision Jesus had. In all the years of his conscious existence, he saw plainly through what scenes he must pass. He bore about continually in his body, his dying, and all the anticipation of the forms of grief which had been marked out for him to endure. Nothing came upon him, as it were, by surprise, and as it is with us. It was ever present to his thoughts, and laid upon his heart; and he was even straitened till his baptism of suffering should be accomplished. Whether it were by

night or by day, whether it were in converse with his friends or at the festive board, (Mark xiv. 8), or amid the glory of the transfiguration, (Luke ix. 31,) he never forgot for a moment, the cup whose ingredients he knew, and the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Yet though he foresaw all his coming sorrows, he never shrunk from encountering them. Once, indeed, when the direst of all was near at hand, he prayed, "Father save me from this hour;" but immediately added, "Yet for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name, thy will be done." Here was submission; not only when the trial came, but when he looked through the long perspective of his predicted sufferings. This was obedience, indeed. Truly, this man was the Son of God.

IV. But with this supreme devotion to the will of God, and this exemplary regard for the duties of religion, there was no failure on his part, in the duties he owed to his parents. 'There is no proper room for collision between these respective obligations. And right obedience is rendered to neither, unless it be rendered to both. His business in the temple concluded, Jesus forthwith returned with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. In this he manifested his reverence for their persons, submission to their authority, and zeal in testifying his love for them.

In these evil days of precocious independence, how many affect to despise a father's counsels and a mother's anxieties, as the effusions of dotard bigotry that has outgrown and forgotten its sym-

pathies with the season of youth. Many alas! are like that unhappy prodigal, who said, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to my share;" impatient to escape from the restraints of home, and to indulge themselves in riotous living.

Many are impatient to enter upon their inheritance, though they know it can only be by the death of the too long lived progenitor. Many cast off all allegiance and incur God's curse against rebellious offspring. Many reject the obligations of filial assistance, and selfishly pander to their own appetites, while they can suffer those who begat them to pine in neglected poverty. Many by evil courses bring down the gray hairs of heart-broken parents with sorrow to the grave. How beautiful the

contrast, in the early life of Jesus, who neither renounced nor despised his parents, on account of his superior abilities, but did homage to the womb that bare him, and to him whom he knew to be but his reputed father, and who had protected his helpless infancy. It would be delightful to go into detail, and dwell upon the recorded instances of his beautiful filial piety. It is important to notice one instance which shows us how it was manifested, and how long it continued. It is evident (Mark vi. 3,) not only that he was the son of a carpenter, but that he followed the occupation himself, for he was reproached with it when he entered upon his ministry. It was indeed the custom of the Jews to give to their sons some mechanical trade, and it was a

matter of reproach to a young man not to have been so brought up. Solon enacted that children who did not maintain their parents in old age, when in want, should be branded with infamy, and lose the privilege of citizens; he, however, excepted from the rule those children whom their parents had taught no trade, nor provided with other means of procuring a livelihood: and it was a proverb of the Jews that, he who did not bring up his son to a trade, brought him up as a thief. But in the case of Jesus, it is but reasonable to believe that he pursued this occupation for his own support, and for the help of his parents; and that it was by this means he provided for the support of Mary and her family, after the death of Joseph, before he entered upon his public life.

In this fact, we see the diligence and industry of his private life, and with what modest patience he abode in seclusion for thirty years, until the appointed time came for engaging in the work of his public ministry, a fact which might be contemplated with advantage by those who, devoting themselves to this office, hasten but half furnished to the service of the altar, as if the Lord had need of their neophyte impatience and zealous incompetence. Our Lord thus dignified an humble station, and commends to us with honour the useful and respectable employments of mechanic industry and honourable toil in the laborious callings of human life; while his example may teach men, both contentment with a less prominent condition, and how they may serve God in their callings. And when,

as was the case with him, ignorant and foolish men give no honour to a minister because he has risen from the workbench or the plough, if he be but apt to teach and is faithful to his work, he may rather glory to be associated with Paul the tent-maker, and with him of whom they said, "Is not this the carpenter?"

In this state of subjection to his parents he continued, honouring and dwelling with them while Joseph lived, and afterwards with Mary, till his entrance on the Mediatorial functions. Nor did he ever outgrow his youthful tenderness. "When he went about doing good," the remembrance of a desolate and widowed mother attended him; and when he was finishing his course, "Love was stronger than death,

and would do its friendly offices amidst the agonies of a crucifixion." How, and what provision was made for her during his triennial ministry, is not written; but we know what legacy was appointed for her in his last will and testament. In the bitterness of his anguish, he compassionated her condition as well as her grief; and when he could no longer think of her in person, he found out a proxy to supply his room and his affections. For while he hung upon his cross, seeing his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, "Woman, behold thy Son;" and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother." Thus mutually recommending the beloved John to her love as one that would thenceforward perform the duty of a

son, and her to his care and protection as one that should henceforth be to him as a beloved mother. And from that hour the dwelling of John became the home of Mary the mother of Jesus, and she found an honoured refuge there.

V. I have spoken of the singular purity and holiness of the character of Jesus. This indeed belongs to his whole career. And it is worthy of especial notice in this connection, not only in order that we may feel the proper impression which it ought to make, but as it serves to qualify all those characteristics of piety and obedience for which his early life was distinguished; and in this relation, it becomes as instructive on the points before us, as any recorded particular of his childhood and early life.

We are in the habit of speaking of the innocence of childhood, and the guileless sincerity of youth ; but who knows not, feels not, that these are but comparative. Alas ! is not folly (sin) bound up in the heart of a child ; and which of us has not reason to deplore his own waywardness, and to intreat for the pardon of the sins of his youth ? But when we contemplate the life of Jesus, we see a model of purity, born without the taint of corruption, and to his last hour entirely without sin. Nay, by his intimate contact with divinity, his holiness was superhuman, even though it be compared with the un-fallen Adam. There is none holy as the Lord. Do we always take in the full force of his immaculate sinlessness ? There have been good men on the

earth, but theirs was at best the imperfect goodness of a fallen nature but partly sanctified. Abraham was the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, and yet he falls into dissimulation. Moses was a faithful servant of God, and the meekest of men, and yet he dies within sight of the promised land for not honouring the Lord in the presence of Israel, and for exhibiting the intemperate transports of passion. David was the man after God's own heart, yet the brightness of his history is stained with the melancholy marks of his foul and dreadful fall. Paul was a wonderful example of holy zeal and labour for the cause of God, yet he too was subject to conflicts with the flesh, and cries out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall de-

liver me from the body of this death?" And John was the beloved disciple, on whose bosom Jesus leaned, yet there was an occasion when he was rebuked for angry and intemperate zeal; and he tells us himself, that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Alas! we are by nature the children of wrath—and our goodness is at the best alloyed, and far from perfect. But there is absolutely nothing of this in the man Christ Jesus. He was born "that holy thing." Satan found nothing in him. He was "without sin." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He was emphatically, "the holy child Jesus."

And what make we of all this in him, who was made of a woman, and made

under the law? It is not human for a being of our race to be thus holy. It surpasses every proper conception of the character of the children of Adam. But Jesus appears with a lustre of holiness, that is not human; that is all divine. Was he, could he be a *mere* man? No! He was what he claimed to be, the Son of the Highest, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God: but he *made* himself of no reputation; emptied himself of his glory, and took upon him the form of a servant—a station in which every creature is placed by the bare fact of his creation—but he *took upon* him the form of a servant; therefore he is no creature, therefore, he is the Creator, God over all, and blessed for ever; and being found in fashion as a man, he

humbled himself and became obedient even unto death ; though he were a son, learning obedience by the things which he suffered.

What a character must he have been even in his childhood ! In all circumstances exhibiting entire freedom from *every* external transgression, and entire and unswerving obedience to *every* claim of duty. And his outward life was but the expression and the transcript of his pure and holy soul. No unhallowed thought ever found entertainment in his mind ; no irregular desire or vengeful passion ever stirred up emotion in his heart ; no motions of sins agitated his members ; no principle or purpose of selfishness ever controlled his conduct. If we might imagine him, amid the usual employments of childhood ; we

should see no fretful impatience, no petulant caprice. If we contemplate him amid the shades of domestic life, we should see no froward perverseness, no rebellious opposition to parental claims, nor any reluctance toward the duties they commanded ; for him no sigh was ever extorted from his father's heart, and over him that mother never found cause to shed a single tear. If we survey him in his intercourse with his fellow-men, we should hear no angry word, nor see any departure from the beautiful simplicity, modesty, gentleness, goodness, and grace, which we instinctively ascribe to him. Wherever we behold him, he is the same tender, patient, loving, pious, and amiable being that afterward went about doing good, and at last died the just for the unjust that

he might bring us to God. Grace was poured upon his lips; wisdom sat enthroned in his heart; the strength of his understanding, and the clearness of his conscience were never defiled and never impaired by any corrupt and degrading bias. Oh, what a childhood—what a youth—what a manhood was this. Was it not worthy to attract and fix upon it for ever, the admiration and the delight of both God and man!

And this now, is an example for us, O! when we look upon it, how it humbles us in the dust. Let all parents ponder these things in their hearts as Mary did, and learn from them how they should care for the religious instruction of their children;

let them both exemplify, and train them to piety, making them your companions, in the ordinances of the sanctuary. No parents, indeed can hope for such a son as Mary's. Yet let them nevertheless consider what their offspring may become, if through turning your hearts unto your children, your children's hearts be turned unto you, as heirs of like precious faith, as heirs together of the grace of life. They shall be blessed, and become a blessing to the world. And, honoured of heaven and earth, their piety shall turn to your joy and praise; for blessings shall be invoked on the womb that bare them, and upon the breasts that nourished their infancy.

But especially does this private life of Christ demand the consideration of

the young. Behold the youthful Jesus and strive to be like him.

“Be not children in understanding, nevertheless be children in malice but in understanding be men.” Imitate the diligence of Jesus in the improvement of time, and in gaining divine wisdom amid the humble domestic and mechanical employments in which he was brought up. If, turning away from the allurements of frivolous dissipation, and redeeming your unemployed hours from listless sloth and idle waste, you set yourselves to the improvement of the mind and the cultivation of the heart, yours shall be the possession of that wisdom whose ways are pleasantness and all her paths are peace. As you grow then in years, seek also to grow in grace, and

in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus shall it be yours, to be honoured by all the pious on earth, and at last to be a gem in that celestial galaxy, where they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever.

Contemplate also his reverence for his parents and for superiors—his contentment and usefulness in an humble sphere, until the appointed time came for his advancement to a more public station—his modesty, and gentleness, and moderation, and quietness, “who neither strove, nor cried, neither was his voice heard in the streets,” and even in the temple, when his superior wisdom could not be all concealed from the astonished ears of the spectators,

still occupying the learner's place—and thus teaching us to reverence the lesson, that days should speak and multitude of years teach wisdom. Instead of the presumption and the pride, the frowardness and insubordination to which youth too much incline, and which none can admire and love, follow rather the venerable example of Him, who though he was the greatest, the best, and wisest of beings, invites us thus, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."

And consider farther the forcefulness of such an example of youthful piety. How many of the young deem themselves too young to be religious, and even contemn the obligations of the Sabbath, and the worship of God's house. They grow in age and sta-

ture, but not in wisdom, neither in favour with God or man; while their precocious impieties reveal to us nothing but prognostics of an evil life and a dreadful end. "Come ye children," hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. - The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

If He, who was "the brightness of

the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," has condescended to become an example of our duty, and to illustrate it in his own life, what added obligations rest upon us in this fact.

And say not, "this is too high, we cannot attain unto it, and therefore it is vain to propose to us such a model." This does not exempt us from striving to be followers, (imitators) of God as dear children,—from aspiring after conformity to the image of his Son. On the contrary, he has shown us what human nature is capable of becoming, under the influence of divine grace. He left us an example. He has done more. He came to lift our feet from the miry clay and from the horrible pit.

By his Spirit, you can be created anew in Christ Jesus. By repentance and faith, you may feel that his blood cleanseth from all sin, and purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living and true God. Receive him, then, as he is offered to you in the gospel, and you shall receive power also to become the sons of God; and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And in the sure title to an inheritance of glory, honour, and immortality, it shall be yours to expatiate and exult in the prospect of beholding His face in righteousness, and anticipating the satisfaction of awaking in the resurrection in the perfect image of God. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet

appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

THE END.









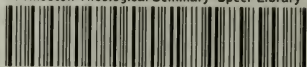




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